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## SERMON CCCCLXXVI.

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### THE MORAL DANGERS AND USES OF ILL HEALTH.

"Why criest thou for thine affliction? For I will restore health unto thee, and I will heal thee of thy wounds, saith the Lord."  
JEREMIAH, 30: 15, 17.

THERE are persons in every community, and the number of such is not small, whose lives are embittered by bodily weaknesses and disabilities, of which no one can tell the trial but he that has had personal experience of it. I mean the subjects of chronic maladies, ailments, and physical sufferings, that, while they weaken the strength by the way, and greatly impede one's usefulness and activity, still do not quite shut a man up and lay him aside, like some sudden attack of acute disease; but allow him to perform life's duties, though in a suffering and toilsome way, through bodily pains and heart-aches and depression of spirits, and harassing impediments, quite unknown to the world. They may be said to go mourning all their days with trials which few can appreciate; that often make life a heavy burden, grievous to be borne, and death to be desired as a relief, and that do in fact slowly but surely bring an end to one's earthly career long before his time. Such persons, if they are Christians, have need of great grace and patience, that after they have done and suffered the will of God, and struggled manfully through the billows of life, they may receive the promises; and if not Christians, there is the louder call for our sympathy; for if in this life only *they* have hope, of all men are they the most miserable. Precluded by ill health from most of the enjoyments of this life, if they have no preparation or hope of a better, then are they wretched indeed.

The trial of protracted ill health, as it is a much greater calamity, so is it far more difficult to be borne, than the bereavement of

friends, or the loss of property, that leaves the health unimpaired. The shock is indeed great at first when dearest relatives are laid low, when sons and daughters, parents, brothers and sisters, and partners, dear as life, are suddenly seized from us by death; when riches take to themselves wings and fly away; when the stream of earthly resources suddenly dries up. But the bouyant heart of man soon recovers, and rises from the blow that at first stunned or even plunged our head under the billows. Time, the universal healer, assuages the violence of our anguish; life's duties call for exertion; grief cannot be nursed; property lost must be made again; and if the physical energies only remain, the mind soon regains its balance and tone after the severest bereavement.

But let the health be undermined; let slow maladies prey upon our bodies; let chronic pains and discomforts, make their home in our enfeebled frames; let the system of nerves get unstrung and disordered; let the animal spirits cease to flow, and the muscular vigor of health be impaired, without altogether laying us aside and breaking us off from the active duties of life, yet

"Let languor and disease invade  
This trembling house of clay,"—

then is it that our trial is the greatest, *this* discipline the most severe to which flesh and blood are here subjected. The very energy that is needed to sustain the wear and tear of life and to support its duties, has now to be spent in baffling disease, and that at the greatest disadvantage; for while perhaps the same amount of care and active service are pressing on us, there is not one-half the strength of health to supply it.

This state has its peculiar dangers as well as antidote, and there are peculiar moral uses which may be derived from it. And, forasmuch as in every community there are not a few who are so afflicted as to be now in this estate, and the healthiest persons are liable also at some future time to be of the number, I propose to develop for our instruction, some of the moral dangers incident to this condition, and the antidotes adapted to it. It is a subject that will be sure to apply to some, and it need not fail of profit to any; for, frail as health is in the strongest, we are all liable to the incursions of disease, and to have the tide of our prosperity arrested. The healthiest this year may be the feeblest next; the sun of prosperity that shines on us now with genial rays, will not shine always. It may be a calm with us now, but we must look out for the storm; for a storm is certainly brewing up among the mountains or off on the sea, that will one day burst upon our unprepared bark. Calamities of some sort are close at hand to us all, if they are not already upon us; for few or none in this life can be long exempt from suffering. Of all it is true, there is a wave now over our heads, or there is one coming; and it is the part of wis-

dom, now in health and prosperity, to consider the days of darkness, for they shall be many, and to parry the strokes of affliction as they come, or make the best of them by having the heart fortified by grace. In pursuing, therefore, this subject, I remark,

I. There is danger that protracted ill health will *sour the disposition*, an effect to be greatly deprecated and guarded against. It was a very true remark dropped by Cecil and preserved by his friend, that "affliction has a tendency, especially if long continued, to generate a kind of despondency and ill-temper. The spirit of prayer does not necessarily come with affliction; and if this be not poured out upon a man, he will, like a wounded beast, skulk to his den and growl there." There is a pertinency in this, which those who have had much to do with chronic invalids, or long afflicted persons in any way, cannot fail sometimes to have observed. When the animal spirits are repressed, as in a long course of ill health they must be, and the spontaneous flow and vivacity of nature is almost necessarily precluded, it is nothing strange, unless a strong effort be made to the contrary, that the temper should get sour, or that it should seem so to others even when it is not. Want of cheerfulness, a quality that cannot be forced, or its semblance long assumed by any one, may be easily construed into moroseness; and, in fact, want of cheerfulness and elasticity, made habitual through the constant pressure of ill health, does not merely seem, but is moroseness. It puts its expression upon the countenance; it looks out gloomily and distressed at the eyes, those windows of the soul; it sets its seal upon the features. It makes one look as if his own blood were curdled, and as if living with him might curdle that of others; when it is all owing to ill health, to bodily maladies that must necessarily involve the mind, and find expression in that seldom deceptive mirror of mind, the countenance. Now and then there is a person so innately cheerful, of a disposition so irrepressibly buoyant and social, and of so happy and strong a conformation of brain and nerves, that no weight of either maladies or misfortunes can keep him under; but he will die before he will become gloomy, that is, before disease has gone so far as to prey much upon his nerves. Still he carries his head above the waves, and keeps his eye cheerfully aloft, and will do so till he dies. If now and then his cheerfulness suffer a temporary eclipse, it is only like the sun drifting through vapors that are scattering as fast as they are gathering, and it will be but a minute before you will see through some open cloud-rift the clear beams of his sunny face. Ah, how true was this of a beloved brother now in glory.

But it is not many that are so happily constituted, and even grace cannot here fully make up the lack of nature. The native temper will appear, and misfortunes and sicknesses will be apt to

sour it, unless it be of that very uncommon happy make we have noticed. There must, then, pains be taken, a struggle be made, uncommon grace be sought in prayer, by those who are the subjects of long-continued, or oft-recurring, disabling pains and maladies, lest they pervert and get the better of the natural disposition. Hard as it is for some persons to do, yet, an aspect of cheerfulness and sociability must be assumed, even where it is far from existing. The voice and manners of a person in health must be imitated, even where the heart only is knowing to its own bitterness and inaptitude to joy through physical suffering, in order that the mind itself may be helped to take on the cheerful type of feeling, of which it assumes the expression, and may be kept from the invasion of those morose and gloomy, and sometimes misanthropic sentiments, that add so greatly to the friction and poignancy of any trial.

Especially should it be made a matter of specific and earnest prayer, by persons so exercised, that suffering may not sour, but soften and subdue; that God's grace may be added, so as to sanctify the trial, to correct its acidities, to neutralize its pernicious tendencies and convert them to good, and to ensure all the moral uses which God designs, and that entire effect on the character which Infinite wisdom aims at in every affliction with which we are afflicted. This is the only antidote to suffering in our power, and the only way to avail ourselves of it; not only the surest remedy, but the best way of taking it.

II. There is danger of protracted ill health making one *selfish*. Whatever turns one's attention and thoughts in upon self; by whatever means a man comes to be much absorbed in himself, his own joys, trials, or infirmities, by so much will his character be likely to become selfish. Now the necessity that is laid upon a person of feeble health, and "often infirmities," of spending so much time and thought upon remedial and invigorating means; the having to do so much as an invalid does for a miserable body that is so soon to be the food of worms; the anxiety and care of patching and propping up, and compensating for the defects of a failing constitution; the devising of ways and means to sustain the sinking spirits and repair the wasting strength,—all this tends powerfully to make the least selfish man much more selfish, and vastly to confirm and augment the selfishness of one naturally inclined that way. "All the pains which my infirmities ever brought upon me," says Baxter, "were never half so grievous an affliction to me, as the unavoidable loss of my time which they occasioned."

A selfish man, unfettered by ill health, having others dependent upon him, mingling freely in the active duties of life, engaging in schemes of benevolence, and coming into collision with others in various forms of activity, has greatly the advantage in the mat-

ter of getting rid of selfishness, over a man whose energies are restrained and hampered by indisposition and infirmity, or introverted and detained upon himself, and kept from that outward expansion, by which self is forgotten, and living for others is made easy. The only thing a man can do in such circumstances is to watch and pray against the besetting sin, with double diligence. Aware of this tendency of the affliction with which he is afflicted, he should countermine it as they do in war. Let him surround the castle of his heart with a ditch, and let into it streams from the word of God and prayer, by which he may protect himself against the invasions of selfishness, and keep the enemy without from having intercourse with, and stirring up to sedition, the traitors he has too much reason to suspect within. All the wakefulness and solicitude of a Christian are needed here, to keep the enemy from getting the upper hand, with a valetudinarian or invalid, or any one that finds his health greatly impaired and bodily infirmities weighing him down, long before his sun is ready to set, or has even gained the meridian.

III. But there is again the danger of protracted ill health engendering hard thoughts of God, low murmurs against the justice and impartiality of his allotments and ways. Perhaps this is the most common effect of long-continued and unrelieved suffering in this way upon most minds, even that of the Christian. Certainly this is the effect upon minds unregenerated. Perfect submission, cheerful acquiescence in the Divine will, entire resignation to all God's dealings and ways, implicit confidence in the Divine rectitude and wisdom, is a great and a rare grace. There are many persons who think they are submissive, until severely tried. Then they find a reluctance of will, an unquiet temper, an unsubdued restlessness of spirit, that prove their mistake. They do not behave and quiet themselves before God, as a weaned child. There is impatience and repining; unexpressed but struggling murmurs of complaint; the spirit of insubmission felt within, though suppressed; a chafing under the yoke, and a shrinking from the whip of God's paternal discipline.

These are symptoms of insubordination, and of the want of an entire cordial yielding up of one's self to God, which it is rare not to see exhibited, more or less, even by the best of men, in seasons of severe trial. Nevertheless, entire submission is both the privilege and duty which they who are thus exercised are called to learn and practise. And how easy, after all, are outward trials, where there is the inward heart-felt peace of true submission! In all our afflictions, it matters not how bitter be the cup, if we only have the heart, as we do always have the privilege, of throwing in, to sweeten it, those two little words of adoption, "My Father!" Only let us feel that the cup is mixed with

a Father's love and presented by a Father's hand, and where is the child of God who will refuse to drink it? It is our impatience and rebellion, that make our trials a curse; but filial love and submission turn the heaviest and the worst into substantial blessings.

If real Christians, we are as truly beloved of God under afflictions, yea more so if only submissive, when bereaved of friends or property, or suffering bodily with disease, repressed and laid aside, as when we are most prosperous and active, and outwardly useful in His service. God can be glorified as well in our suffering and waiting as in our enjoying and doing; and this is an important lesson for a man to learn under affliction. It was a noble sentiment of Zwingli, uttered not long before his memorable death at the battle of Cappel, that "a carrier who has a long road to go must make up his mind to wear out his wagon and his gear during the journey. If he carry his merchandise to the appointed spot, that is enough for him. We are the wagon and the gear of God. There is not one of the articles that is not worn, twisted, or broken; but our Great Driver will not the less accomplish by our means, his vast designs."

Let persons who are struggling under ill health remember that, and take courage from the thought, *There is not one of the articles that is not worn, twisted, or broken; but our Great Driver will not the less accomplish by our means his vast designs. Worn out, burdened, unserviceable, impeded with disease, seemingly useless, and about to be laid aside, as we may sometimes be, yet let us remember that God can as well serve himself with us then as when we are at our best estate.*

"It is the Lord whose matchless skill,  
Can from afflictions raise,  
Matter eternity to fill  
With ever-growing praise."

If the discipline be only sanctified to us, grievous as it is, it will be far better than though we were not subjected to it. And who knows but that at this moment it is working out for us a greater measure of usefulness here, as well as a far more exceeding, yea, an eternal weight of glory hereafter? In all cases, the Lord's time, not mine; the Lord's way, not mine; the Lord's will, not mine, must be the language of the believer's heart. What Thou wilt, when Thou wilt, how Thou wilt, where Thou wilt. Anything is well for us, if it be but for the glory of God, and by His permission or ordering, as we may be altogether certain it is.

Perhaps, too, at the very moment we are thinking our bodies are just ready to succumb to disease, and that God is going to lay us entirely by, it is the very time He is about to begin to build us up. If only brought to the state of calm, sweet, holy submission,

it may be the starting point of greater usefulness, if not better health, than ever before. It is, after all, when believers "sojourn in Mesech and dwell in the tents of Kedar," that they find out the most, and have the most blessed experience of God's presence and the truths of his Word. They learn comparatively little of the preciousness of scripture promises, until placed in circumstances of difficulty and distress. There is a beauty and consolatory power in the Bible which nothing but affliction can fully bring out. Affliction is to the Word of God, in its relations to the believer, what the sand-paper or rough pumice-stone is in the hands of the polisher, evolving a beauty and excellence that could not otherwise come out and appear. This has been so verified in the experience of some Christians, that they will declare their sorrows to have been far more than compensated by the consolations afforded in the hour of tribulation; so that it would have been clearly for their loss to have escaped their trials. Only let there be some friendly heart and hand in the darkest time to give a Christian counsel, and pluck for his healing one of the leaves from the tree of life, and help him to the use of the wings of faith and love, which sometimes are so that they will not of themselves spread and soar, and it is seldom, even under the heaviest burden of affliction, that the real child of God will not rise and sing.

I have sometimes thought it is with certain Christians as with very large birds. When I was in a whale-ship in the Pacific, and we used sometimes to catch, with hook and line thrown astern, that most majestic and beautiful of all birds, the white-winged gigantic Albatros, I observed that of itself it could never rise from the even surface of the deck and soar aloft, though unconfined and at liberty, if it liked; but we must toss the noble bird overboard, and lift him quite clear of the ship's rail, before he could use his glorious pinions and mount aloft into the air. Then he would stretch those ample wings, and sail away through space as easily as one breathes, and as if the elastic element of air and the bird were one, making the gazer wonder and fairly long to be taking the same aerial flight.

Even so is it sometimes with the Christian. He is brought by Providence into straits and situations, whence he cannot rise and extricate himself alone, where the wings of faith and love seem to be of no avail to him, until a friendly hand lifts him up and throws him out upon the deep, where he must say, with Peter, "Lord, save; I perish." Then he loses despair; he surmounts the difficulty; he breaks his prison; he mounts up as on eagle's wings; the pinions of faith and love sustain him and bear him away aloft, and he wonders at the night-mare of doubt and fear that kept him from using them before. He is ashamed of the wrong thoughts of God that had begun to gather and darken in his mind. He sees that God was infinitely wise and good in appointing the discipline

to which he has been subjected. Now, of all the wearisome days and nights that were appointed him, he would not have a single one less of pain and debility. Now those unuttered but felt murmurs against the dispensation of Providence, fill him with shame and sorrow. Peculiar and trying as his case may have been, he discovers in it a great many blessings and advantages, and beneficial consequences to flow from it, which he did not see before. Happy is the man whose sight is thus cleared and his heart enlarged to trace the manifold wisdom and mercy of God, in dispensations that once seemed dark. May God shed light and comfort upon the path of every sufferer; and may those whose severe trial is continued ill-health, find it sanctified to them, and be kept from all the moral dangers incident thereto, and from this especially, of murmuring against God.

It remains only to offer and apply a single remark. No one can be known until tried, known to himself, or known to his friends. It is *furnace-heat* that proves the metal, whether it be good or bad; and no less than that will thoroughly purge away our dross and tin. We must be wrought in the forge of suffering, and put into the crucible and alembic of trial, before our native ore will run, or its impurities be sublimed. And often, such is our hardness and stubborn temper, it is God's breath that must be blowing the bellows before the process of refining will get so far as to reflect His image from our melting and obedient souls. And then we must be moulded and hammered into various shapes by God's painful discipline, and deeply graved upon by His marking tools, before we can be at all fitted for His best uses here, or for glory hereafter. Hence the great truth as well as beauty of that familiar saying by Leighton, "that God hath many sharp cutting instruments and rough files for the polishing of his jewels; and those he especially esteems, and means to make the most resplendent, he hath oftenest his tools upon."

Brethren, let us not be sorry to have God's graving tools often at work upon us. But rather, irritating though they sometimes be to flesh and blood, let us be anxious to have them inscribing upon us, through suffering, that "new name which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it." Let us desire to be made perfect by suffering, as was the great Captain of our salvation. In our religious life, it is far better to be exposed early to the heat of the furnace, and to be blown upon by the wintry blasts of adversity, and even to feel all God's waves and billows going over one, than to be gliding always upon quiet seas in the genial sun-light, or resting at ease under the grateful shade of worldly prosperity. In the soul's navigation for eternity, a storm is better than a calm, and it is safer scudding before a tempest, if it only be toward the port of peace, than lying-to in many a gale of earthly favor and applause, that will blow us anywhere than to heaven.

We have learned this on the ocean, that a ship in a storm or heavy head-beat sea, must have sail enough on to steady her and steer by, and to run away from the waves or surmount them. Otherwise she will be liable to fall into the trough of the sea, or broach-to and be boarded by a disastrous wave. So with the religious mind in the great waves of affliction: when the waters of calamity roar and are troubled, and a man's heart is failing him for fear and for looking after those things which are coming, it is often not so well and safe to lie-to and wait for a lull, brooding meanwhile upon one's trouble, and anxiously casting eyes over what seems to be a great heaving waste of impending adversity, as to keep busy, if possible, with carrying some sail, and trying to scud before the gale.

At such times of trial, there is great need of faith to stand at the helm and keep the soul steady; and this is the very benefit of adversity, of affliction by ill-health, or trial in any way, that it demands and gives exercise to faith. Whatever increases and confirms that excellent grace, whatever tries and fixes that crowning virtue in a man, is a great blessing. Is there an afflicted person here, now pining under God's trying discipline by ill-health, let me say to such in the words of the text, *Why criest thou for thine affliction; for I will restore health unto thee, and will heal thee of thy wounds, saith the Lord.* Never let that heart feel, or those lips utter querulous things of the blessed God your Father; but only cry to Him earnestly for spiritual health and healing, and for the strength of Christ to be made perfect in your weakness, and who knows but He will restore health unto thee, and heal thee in more senses than one! Spiritual health, we know He will give, when you sincerely and in faith ask for it; and health of body, too, will be sure to come, or a happy remove from a house that is falling to pieces, when you shall have secured all the spiritual uses of your trial. Give all diligence, then, and be earnest to have it sanctified to your spiritual and everlasting good, which may God, only wise, of His mercy grant.

And to the children of God, exercised in whatever way by affliction, we have it to say, in the words of our Saviour, "as many as I love I rebuke and chasten." "I know, O Lord, that thy judgments are right, and that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me." The furnace of affliction is meant only to refine us from our earthly dross, and from the oxides that form on us in the fire-damps of a sinful world, and to keep us soft for the impression of God's own stamp and image. It is best, then, that we should remain there till our impurities are all burned away,

"Till formed in our obedient souls  
The image of God's love."

How much better that we should be beaten often with the rod of

God, than left to grow hard and worldly, as most do, under continued prosperity. Let us kiss the rod that smites, take submissively whatever God sends, and rob calamities and misfortunes, so called, of their power to sting, by eyeing in them all, the paternal hand and wisdom and love of God. So shall we find it good to be afflicted, that we may learn God's statutes, and we shall have that effect wrought upon our characters, which, ordinarily, the discipline of suffering and trial, in some shape or other, can alone accomplish, with creatures fallen and perverse like us, and which it must therefore be the lot of all, sooner or later, to meet, in one form or another.

Let not those who live along for years comparatively exempt from trials, think it will be so always, or deem it certainly an evidence of the Divine favor and of God's satisfaction in them. It may be, it often is, far otherwise. Remember it was of rebellious Judah and Ephraim that God said, "*Why should ye be stricken any more? Ye will revolt more and more. For the people turneth not unto him that smiteth them, neither do they seek the Lord of hosts. Ephraim is joined to his idols: let him alone.*" It is fearful to be let alone of God, in unsanctified prosperity; for then the man is likely to be hardened in sin, and he dies in stupidity, without hope, to have the waves of sorrow beat upon him in the next world with eternal storm.

There is a certain calm at sea, which sailors call breeding-weather; and I once knew an awful tempest to burst as it were at once upon the lap of such a calm. O, what a typhoon I seem to see now breeding in this great moral calm, to break upon the heads of the unconverted! The moment they sail out of time, into the broad ocean of eternity, what a storm will fall upon many a now gallant bark, rich in its freight of immortality! Stop them, ye that love their souls, and beseech them with tears to take in Christ for their pilot, that they may avert the gathering vengeance, and outride the impending storm. And may we all be living in such a state of preparedness for life's trials, that when they come we can calmly say,

"My lifted eye, without a tear,  
The gathering storm shall see;  
My steadfast heart shall know no fear;  
That heart shall trust in thee."

And now to that Great Being, who doeth all things well, and dispenses all life's allotments in perfect rectitude, to God only wise, be honor and glory, both now and evermore. Amen.

## SERMON CCCCLXXVII.

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### HOME EVANGELIZATION 'THE FIRST DUTY OF AMERICAN CHRISTIANS.

"Behold the Lord thy God hath set the land before thee, go up and possess it, as the Lord God of thy fathers hath said unto thee; fear not, neither be discouraged."  
DEUT. 1: 21.

THIS was the order given to the children of Israel, on their first approach to the land of promise, after their deliverance from the bondage of Egypt. They had witnessed the unparalleled wonders of the Exode, the Red Sea, and of Horeb. They had received their law and ratified their national covenant at Sinai. But they were wanting in the elements of a spiritual piety, essential to such an emergency; but little of Abraham's faith lingered amongst them; and, born and educated in an atmosphere of gross idolatry, they were fearfully degenerate and perverse, and needed a severe discipline to fit them for the service enjoined, and for the reward promised, and were condemned, therefore, to long years of wandering and conflict, till of the grown-up generation which left Egypt, Joshua and Caleb only passed the wilderness and entered Canaan.

Such crises of duty and destiny often overtake the church, when her fidelity in a single emergency is decisive. Through such a period, it is believed, the church in these United States is now passing. She has to meet the amazing responsibility of evangelizing this land, or prove treacherous to the greatest and weightiest interests that have devolved upon any church since the apostolic age.

I have selected the order given to the marshalled tribes of Israel, as an appropriate *Home Missionary* motto for us.\* It is the urgent imperative duty of the American Church, to evangelize our own country. Our policy is strikingly a home policy. I assume the existence of a missionary spirit in the great body of believers. It is the glory of the American Church, that the missionary fire of modern times was early kindled in the hearts of her sons, and that up to this hour we have been among the foremost to publish the gospel to the nations. It can no longer be doubted that the spirit of missions is the vital spirit of the gospel. The gospel is obviously and eminently *missionary*, in all its principles and precepts and inspired examples. If we have read it aright, and felt its transforming power, we must all of us breathe a missionary

\* Preached before the Board of Home Missionaries of the Presbytery of Rochester.

spirit. We must feel ourselves committed to the missionary work. What I insist upon is, that our *home* operations are a vital part of this great enterprise. The modern efforts for the evangelization of this country, originated in the purest spirit of missions. Our own land is a vast field of itself, richer and riper than any heathen community known to us. Its decisive influence on the spread of the gospel abroad, should lead us to seek its spiritual renovation as the most hopeful means for the conversion of the world. We seek the salvation of our countrymen, not only for their own sakes, but for the sake of mankind! This is our first and most sacred duty.

I. It is so, because *it is in accordance with the Divine plan for spreading the gospel*. Christ's theory of instrumentality is, to arrest the individual heart, and lay the mighty motives of Redemption upon it, till it shall be subdued and [transformed, when that redeemed soul is to operate upon the character of its neighbor, and thrill and mould it instrumentally to the same heavenly pattern. This circle of influence, as it widens, becomes a church and secures the peculiar presence of the Holy Spirit. It is then prepared to bring its concentrated energies to bear upon the surrounding world. This is its missionary stage. And the same principle is to govern all our outward aggressive movements. The first offer of life is to be made to our neighbors and associates. When they have savingly accepted, or hopelessly rejected, the offer, we may pass on to the more distant destitutions. This order of effort is very distinctly prescribed in the Scriptures. The first preachers were to go to the "lost sheep of the house of Israel." The way of the Gentiles, or even a Samaritan city, they might not enter. The Saviour, after his resurrection, reminded the eleven that they were *now* to preach repentance and remission of sins in His name among *all* nations; yet, true to this fundamental arrangement, "beginning at Jerusalem." This order they strictly followed. They opened their commission in that guilty city, and not till it had rejected the gospel, and driven them out by persecution, did they turn to the Gentiles. This is the Divine method of procedure in every age. This is the simple plan which our great Home Missionary movement contemplates.

Our Pilgrim fathers floated their religious establishments across the Atlantic, and moored them to Plymouth Rock. As soon as their own immediate wants were supplied, they looked out after the tribes that were beyond them. Especially as their own numbers pushed out into the wilderness, they faithfully carried to them the gospel. The true policy has ever been, *to help the needy until they can help themselves*, and then expect them to pay the debt, by helping those more needy beyond them. This is the simple theory of Home Missions. It is the Apostolic theory—the

Divine theory. Here, in this land, it has such a breadth of application, and involves such stupendous results, that we have become sceptical about the whole matter. Our field has enlarged so rapidly, and grown suddenly into such vast dimensions, and our population is increasing in such a fearful ratio, that all past notions of colonization utterly fail. We are overwhelmed with the magnitude of our work, and with the pressure of the necessity that is laid upon us, and shrink back trembling at our own destiny, and almost doubt, at times, the ordination of God, and the sufficiency of the gospel to accomplish the work. But neither the Divine will nor the Divine economy has changed. The great Head of the Church has not relinquished His claim upon us, or modified His plan of saving the world. He has furnished us a theatre for action, and for a grand comprehensive enduring work of faith, such as has been given to no other people; and if we are faithful to our principles, to our mission, our Master, we shall see results unparalleled in the past history of the Church. But we must understand the *gospel theory* and plant ourselves firmly upon it. We must learn and keep in view the condition of our missionary field, and cherish and act on the conviction, that the evangelization of our own rapidly rising and influential nation is the first urgent solemn concern of the American Church.

II. It is so, because *we have a prospect of success here which we have no where else.* We feel bound to expend our missionary means every where, on this principle. Upon the foreign field our Boards select those points where most good, present or prospective, can be rationally hoped for. If for any cause, this result is defeated, they feel bound to remove to another field. Not only are we committed to the work of evangelizing our own country on the *Divine* principle of proximity as to place and relation, but also on the *economical* principle that we can do more good with our means here than elsewhere. There is a marked wisdom in the rule that binds us to care first of all for the souls in our immediate locality and sphere of personal influences, and to seek above all their salvation. We shall be far more likely to influence them, than any others, and the same measure of effort will generally produce greater results. The Gospel to achieve its blessed triumphs, must be brought into close actual contact with men in all their habits of thoughts and conditions of being, in their daily wants and woes, their joys and sorrows, their living and dying. Hence, example is so much insisted on, is so powerful a means in advancing Christ's kingdom. But where can this influence be best employed, at home or abroad, upon neighbors or strangers, with a people whose language and history and genius are familiar, or with one whose peculiar mental and moral phenomena we can never perfectly understand? The answer is obvious. We have, in

our own land, it may be at our very doors, souls that will be lost, unless we put forth vigorous and timely efforts to save them. Comparatively little labor will be instrumental in their salvation. But if that little be withheld, it will be more tolerable for the heathen world hereafter, than for them. No plea, therefore, of superior numbers abroad, no efforts for distant benefit, will discharge us from our obligations to the perishing at our own doors! We owe them a duty which we owe to no others. We have an inducement derived from prospective success, which no other field can offer.

These are not mere speculations. The records of our Home Missionary operations show that the greatest results flow from the fewest means. Laborious, self-denying missionaries in our western settlements receive, often not more than one hundred dollars a year from the funds of the church; and with that amount, sustain the ordinances of the gospel where, otherwise, they would not be enjoyed. They mount the outmost wave of emigration, and share the privations and hardships of the border settlers; but they lay deep down in the social state, the firm foundations of religious institutions. Very soon a church is gathered to bless and mould the growing population, for unknown generations of the future. In a very few years, it can support itself, and pay back more than it has received.

This fact has ample illustration on this very field. Western New York has been evangelized within the present century, and mostly by missionary labor at first. In 1826, when the American Home Missionary Society was formed, there were, in the seventeen western counties, less than two hundred Presbyterian and Congregational churches, and about ten thousand communicants. There were then twenty-six missionaries on this field. Since that time, from fifty to seventy churches have been annually assisted. In fifteen years after the formation of the National Society, the churches on this same field had nearly doubled in number, and the communicants more than tripled. More than one hundred thousand dollars had been raised for home missions alone, forty thousand dollars more than all that had been received, which last sum has gone into the treasury of the Parent Society, to build up the waste places in other parts of the country. Besides, more has been contributed, in some years, on this field, for foreign missions, than all the benefactions of fifteen South-western States to the same cause. The collections for the Bible, Tract, Sabbath-school, and other benevolent enterprises, have been equally liberal.

So much for the *profits* of home missionary investment! It is the cheapest, the most speedy, and certain mode of doing good, presented to the heart of American philanthropy and religion. If we burn to do much good, and save many souls with our means,

we should exert our influence to help on this enterprize. We here act on the beginnings of mighty nations. A little influence judiciously expended in the forming stage of society, will be multiplied and increased a thousand fold, in a very short period. The home missionary enterprize is an eminently successful work.

III. The great argument for the evangelization of this country is, that *Providence plainly points to this field, as the peculiar sphere of our highest and grandest endeavors*. Not merely the revealed principle of gospel procedure, and the weightiest economical motives, direct our energies here, but a singular combination of events, give thrilling energy and point to these considerations. Our country is a perfect anomaly in the history of this earth's settlement. Its discovery and position, and the character of the people, mark it out as destined to accomplish a great and blessed work in the world. This continent was hidden from the keen eye of civilized man for thousands of years, till those great events, that mark a new era in human progress, had all taken place. The mariner's Compass, the art of Printing, and the great Reformation, had awakened movements and given birth to enterprizes, new in the history of the race.

The people chosen of God to make the great experiment now making here, were fitted for their work in a peculiar manner. They were cradled in the wilderness of Germany, and "brought off from the continent just in time to save them from absorption in the great monarchies of the Middle Ages." They were nurtured in the storm-girt Isles of Great Britain, disciplined by want, and war, and every species of conflict, and finally purged by the fire of the Reformation, till they stood forth, as it has been well expressed, "the true nobility of England and of the world—English yeomen and English Puritans." It has been justly said, that "the English nation was born of the best blood in all Europe, the Anglo-Saxon, and the best seed in Old England was sifted out by persecution and sown in this Western wilderness. The first settlers of our country were the most active, adventurous, independent, and unconquerable spirits of the Old World! And all the circumstances of their location and history in this New World, conspire to foster those peculiar and lofty traits of character. They left behind them the shackles of prescription; for Providence did not suffer them to remain till they had bowed to wear and hug the fetters of English Church and State. They brought with them no guide but the Bible. They found nothing here to hamper their free spirits, and they established institutions as new as the world on which they had set foot—as fresh and free as the atmosphere they breathed—as vast and comprehensive as the continent which was open to their enterprize."

While here, they have received a peculiar training for the great

work of home evangelization. They were confined for many years to the Atlantic coast, a portion of the country comparatively sterile. The rich valley of the West was garrisoned for a century and a half, by broad dark forests, and fierce savage foes. The first generations of our settlers were nurtured amid the hard rocks and harder frosts of New England; and, under that rough discipline, acquired the character of hardy daring and unflinching endurance, so essential to pioneer missionaries. Want, dependence, and peril, formed a fierce crucible, in which the elements of their social state were consolidated, and much of the dross of their characters burnt up.

After the Revolution, and the firm establishment of our Republican government and free institutions, God opened to American enterprise the broad Valley of the Mississippi, one of the richest and fairest regions on this globe!

It was an early and cherished principle with the settlers of this country, to share their new home with any who might desire or seek an asylum from oppression, where freedom of conscience might be enjoyed. The invitation went forth; and, so long as it was a home of hardy toil and principle and enlightened freedom only, few, comparatively, were anxious for the boon. But when the Valley of the West was opened, the report of its fertile soil and vast extent, flew like good tidings to the oppressed and overtasked and despairing millions of Europe; and there was a mighty tide set in motion towards this land. The good and the bad, the intelligent and the ignorant, the rich and the poor, have been pouring upon our shores in a constantly swelling stream! The opening of such a territory to the enterprise of our country and the world, has given a spring to population and to immigration, unexampled in the annals of man! There may have been cities built by princely munificence and power, and conquered nations poured into them, to gratify the pride and swell the glory of monarchs. But no where have men sought spontaneously an asylum and a home, in such vast numbers, as in the United States! This stream is constantly swelling. There are vast regions of our territory yet unoccupied. There is nothing in the physical condition of this country to check this living tide for centuries to come. It is almost overwhelming to contemplate the prospective millions that are to dwell in this land. The steady increase of population, during the last half century, forms an accurate *datum* upon which to base our calculations for the future. At the present rate of increase, the number of souls in the United States *doubles* in less than twenty-five years. According to this ratio, our population, in the year 1850, will be twenty-two and a half millions; in the year 1900, ninety millions; in 1925, one hundred and eighty millions; in 1950, three hundred and sixty millions; in 1975, seven hundred and twenty millions, and at the end of

the next century, one thousand four hundred and forty millions—more than the entire present population of the globe!

But it is not to be expected that such rapid increase will continue, after the whole territory becomes densely populated. According to the estimate of Professor Barrows, "rejecting the belt of barren land, about three hundred miles broad, which lies East of the Rocky Mountains, the territory now claimed by the United States may be stated, in round numbers, at two millions of square miles. On the soil of Massachusetts, in 1840, there were more than ninety-eight inhabitants, on an average, to every square mile. When the whole country shall become as densely settled only as Massachusetts, the United States will contain nearly two hundred millions of souls. But a large portion of our soil is much *better* than that of Massachusetts. Its average excellence is fully equal to that of France. The population of France is about two hundred and eight to the square mile. This will give four hundred and sixteen millions as the number of inhabitants which the United States are capable of supporting with entire comfort. It is believed this estimate falls far short of the actual capacities of our soil, under the most approved mode of culture. We seek not what is possible, but what is certain. It is therefore *certain*, as any event lying in the future, and known only by the power of human reasoning, that, unless blighted by the strokes of Providence, or given over to the scourges of unbridled sin, the limit of four hundred millions, at least, will be reached in this country, in a short period, nearly twice the present population of Europe!"

This immense mass of human beings are to be influenced decisively by what *we* shall do for them now. We are laying the *foundations* on which these bustling millions are to build for time and for eternity. This is a solemn and fearful fact. It invests all our home missionary movements with awful interest and sublimity! We are living near the fountain head of tremendous influences. We are acting upon more minds, in the prospective and certain results of our conduct, than have ever yet been moved by a single impulse. Well did the sainted Evarts, in almost prophetic strains, declare, "Never was there such a call to bring consecrated talent into exercise—never such a reward as it now offers to a benevolent heart. The man whose labors shall contribute, in any material degree, to raise up, and purify, and ennoble the future millions of America, will do more for himself, as aiming to exert a salutary influence, than has ever yet been done for the most successful aspirant, by all that the world calls fame. The preacher who sends abroad a sermon, full of great and striking thoughts, that command the attention of the religious world and make their way through a thousand channels to successive ages; the sacred bard who composes a hymn, that shall be stereo-

typed, a century hence, on the other side of the Rocky Mountains, and printed on the same page with Cowper's

"O for a closer walk with God;"

or the "Martyrs glorified" of Watts; the writer who shall print a warm and stirring treatise on practical religion, which shall stand by the side of the "Saints' Rest," in the library of every family, when our country shall have become thoroughly and consistently Christian; the editor of a periodical, or the agent of any of our religious charities, who shall indite a paragraph able to move the hearts of men to great and noble deeds, and to secure for itself a permanent existence among the elements of thought and action; the man who shall do any one of these things, or any thing of similar character, will exert an efficient influence over more minds than have ever yet heard the name of Homer or Cicero; and will cheer more hearts, during a single generation, than have ever yet responded to the calls of the mightiest genius. Any man, it may be added, who shall give money to build up missionary churches in the West—to lay the foundation of Christian institutions and influence, that shall become radiating points, illuminating, moulding, and saving the crowded millions of the great valley, will do more for himself, in blessing his race and laying up treasure in heaven, than in an ordinary life-time of toil, under other circumstances!

These providences of God are very peculiar. Here is a field unspeakably rich in promise and prospective results. It is our own country. These springing sovereignties at the West, are not other nations, not distant Gentiles. Their teeming millions of inhabitants are our fellow citizens, bound to us by the ties of patriotism and humanity, of common interest and common safety! God has placed us in these responsible relations, for some great end. A large portion of these rushing thousands to the valley of the West, are foreigners of different habits, faith, and hopes from ourselves. We are accustomed to look abroad upon the lands of their nativity and sigh over their ignorance and superstition, and wretched oppression. We would gladly read them lessons of freedom, and teach them the pure Gospel, and share with them our hopes of immortality. But we cannot reach them where they are, or at best, can do but little for them; and so the Disposer of all hearts is inclining them in great numbers, to seek our shores where we can labor for their salvation under the most hopeful circumstances. They will come faster than we can teach and transform them. But with God's blessing, we can do much for them, and for the cause of liberty, and spiritual religion throughout the world. It is one of the clearest purposes of Providence, developed in modern times, that these dark and fettered spirits are directed to

our shores to be enlightened, delivered, and saved. Our government forthwith endows them with civil liberty. It is our vocation, Christian brethren, to make them "freemen of the Lord:" *they must be evangelized!* God points us to this duty, most plainly, in His providence. We are making our grand experiment amid the memorials of two distinct races which have perished from our soil. The Red man just lingers among us, sad, dispirited, and lonely, a touching memento of a race that once roamed over these wide regions proud, free and fearless. Further back in the night of our country's history, lie the memorials of another race more enlightened and cultivated, and probably far more numerous, of which no tradition remains. Almost from the Alleghany to the Rocky Mountains, through the very heart of the great Western valley, are scattered the remains of their civilization, as enduring and almost as lofty as the everlasting hills! These mute messengers from a far-off age, utter their admonitory lessons in our ears, and teach us emphatically that a glorious country, teeming myriads, and a high degree of civilization merely, will not preserve us from a similar destiny. What monuments of wisdom and of warning has God cast about us! Clear as the sun in mid-heaven is the hand-writing of His great designs, respecting His Church here. If we fail to fulfil the trust committed to us, fail to meet the pressing emergency, the judgments of God will overtake us.

IV. *Our own preservation* demands that we should evangelize this country. We are linked together so intimately, that our destiny is inseparably connected with the religious and moral improvement of the whole country. Truth and error, purity and corruption, light and darkness, will not dwell here side by side, in peace and quietness. We have no bulwarks of hoary public opinion to control the excited elements. There is, unquestionably, to be a severe conflict of sentiments in this country. We have here the representations of every creed, in politics and religion. It is the standing maxim of practice with us, "give every man a hearing." There is probably no country on earth where the naked power of opinion, or respect for authority, is more feeble, than in our own. This is especially true of the West. There society is in its elements. These elements are to be moulded and swayed by the power of superior attraction. Whatever influence is first and perseveringly applied to them, will be decisive.

It is no new truth, that the West is soon to control the political destinies of this country. We see now the dawn of that day; we shall soon feel its noon-tide power. We cannot neglect the destitutions on our borders without self-ruin. The older and more orderly communities cannot cease to give their means and influence to establish the Gospel in our new settlements, without

imminent peril, "as long as there is an unpeopled and unsanctified West, stretching out toward the setting sun," in the glowing language of Professor Post, "and annually starting nation after nation into life, *the moral and religious East must vitalize and assimilate that monstrous growth, or be dragged by it, a body of death, down to the grave!*" This duty involves the question of our salvation or destruction. We are bound to the West by ties more sensitive than the telegraphic wires. If the lightnings of passion play there, we shall feel the influence. The bolt that falls there will prostrate us without any appreciable lapse of time. Our country is *one*. Our institutions are bound up in a common destiny. We cannot settle down and enjoy our own good things, indifferent to the fate of our western neighbors. Their doom will certainly involve us in the disaster. With us, emphatically, "selfishness is suicide." The noblest promptings of patriotism, therefore, and the keenest instincts of self-preservation, impel us to do what we can to evangelize the West.

This attempt should be made *without delay*. This is unquestionably the propitious moment. The surging waters of social commotion at the West, will soon cut themselves channels deep and broad. Now they may be turned in almost any direction; but after a few years, all will be fixed and permanent. If we ever take possession of that land for Christ, we must do so quickly. If we do not take care of the West, others will do it for us. Other eyes, and evil ones too, are upon that great centre of population and power. That rich Valley has been more accurately mapped out, and is better understood, perhaps, to day, as to all its points of present and prospective influence, in Rome, than in New York. The Pope has earnest longings after the dominion of this fair land. Despotism has its eye here, and would fain erect its throne on the demolished structure of our liberties. Money and men are pouring freely into the western valley from papal countries. In every commanding position the foundations of educational and religious establishments are being laid, broad enough and deep enough to endure for all time. We must be in a hurry, or the Jesuit will be there before us. To a great extent, the West is now uncommitted. It is waiting to be moulded. It will yield to whatever influence is first brought to bear upon it. Truth there has a fair battle-field.

Some men make a merit of saying, on this subject, that they are not alarmists. For one, I confess I am alarmed, and would to God I could alarm others. It is not the possible contingency of "Barbarism" that terrifies me. There is a much nearer danger. The mass of our population, it is true, will never become Romanists until they do become barbarized; but we may be ruined before that can take place. If this portion of our population must be benighted, let them be under the control of the priests. It is,

perhaps, the least of two evils, that the mass of our foreign Romanist population are so blindly governed by their spiritual teachers. It is doubtful whether we could dispense with this agency, in restraining these ignorant and corrupt masses, and keeping them in check, until they can be remoulded by our institutions, and truly converted to God. The great difficulty is to take care of the priests. The designs upon this country are political rather than religious. The whole Papal system, indeed, is religious only in name. Superstition is the strongest bond which despotism can bind on the human soul, and the Papal church is the best organized system of police which the world has ever known. Hence the perpetual alliance between that church and monarchy. The real centre of foreign Papal operations for the United States hitherto, has been *Vienna not Rome*.

The spirit and workings of our free institutions, are directly hostile to monarchy and to the long cherished designs of the despots of the old world; and if they shall recover from the shock which the spirit of recent revolution has given them, we may reasonably expect that they will renew and vastly increase their efforts, to subvert, if possible, our liberties, and thereby stop and roll back the swelling tide of social reform and intellectual and religious emancipation, which is seemingly threatening the very existence of the old order of things. The Papal system and organization offers the only practicable medium and agency for accomplishing this, and therefore, no available treasures of men or money will be withheld, to foster and give ascendancy to these on this republican soil.

Such have been, and will doubtless continue to be, the special patrons of Popery in the United States; and yet, the great mass of our citizens cannot see any thing *alarming* in all this. All political parties court the influence of Papists, and conceal from their adherents the true sources of danger. The political press is afraid to speak out on this subject. Popery unfurls the banner of religion, and this is a sufficient pretext for treating it with sanctity. It controls votes, therefore politicians caress it. Not one political press in ten, dare publish the *facts* on this subject, that are known to every well-informed man. The masses, consequently, remain in ignorance. Because it is connected with politics, the pulpit, to a great extent, has been silenced. And the day may come when our religious liberties will be sold; our Protestant consciences delivered up to the keeping of Rome! Then, farewell civil freedom! Farewell intelligence! Farewell virtue! American *Republicanism* cannot long survive after American *Protestantism* is stricken down. Our glorious free-school system would perish, all that elevates, and purifies, and energizes, and blesses us as a people, would be swept away, and a dark winter-cloud stretch out over the bright spring-tide of our history! That day, if ever it

come, will witness a conflict, in comparison with which, our recent wretched war with Mexico, were a pastime. For if once the spirit of *Protestantism* is fairly roused and enlisted, there will be scenes of stern valor, and heroic endurance, and wild energy, such as American Christianity alone can produce.

As Christians, as patriots, as men, we ought, therefore, to give this country the gospel, and mould her laws, and institutions, and policy, and the masses of mind, by it. As Protestants, we should devote to it our choicest means and ceaseless vigilance. Our beloved institutions are in jeopardy. The danger is not doubtful or distant. The religious feeling must be *aroused*. The church must be disentangled from her unrighteous alliance with politics, so far, at least, as to hold her principles in higher estimation than party success. She must gird up her energies anew in the great work of home evangelization. We cannot prevent the Romanist from coming to our shores, and we would not, if we could; but we may, perchance, open his blind eyes, and, eventually, break off the fetters of priestcraft from his soul. And now is the time. This is the crisis of danger! If our schools, and republican spirit, and Christian efforts can be made effectual to mould a single generation of the children of Papists, we are safe! They may surge to the sad extreme of open infidelity. That seems almost unavoidable; but it is less to be dreaded than utter want of principle, and treachery under the garb of religion. Infidels are generally willing their children should be taught religion; and, through the gloomy gateway of skepticism, if no other, we may yet hope to receive the descendants of Papists into the true fold of the great Shepherd! The gifts, therefore, which we bestow upon this cause—the time, and toil, and alms, and prayers, should be large enough to pay the debts of enlightened self-interest, patriotism, and Christianity together! They will discharge us from one of the most solemn trusts ever committed to man, and be a benevolent investment, the interest of which, eternity alone can properly estimate.

V. We should evangelize this country *for the sake of the world*. As if the motive to save *four hundred millions*, so obviously dependant upon our fidelity at this high juncture, were not sufficient, the *world* is waiting for us! Equally distinct and peculiar are the indications of Providence, that it must be the work of this country, chiefly, to disciple the nations. This is a common thought, and I need not dwell upon it; but it sheds peculiar interest and solemnity over all the considerations which have been named.

We use a language now spoken by fifty millions of our race, and in partial use among one hundred and fifty millions more. It perhaps embodies "more of scientific research, practical in-

vention, and theological disquisition, than any other language on earth." It has been happily denominated the "missionary tongue." Its stores of religious literature are destined to instruct and enrich the world.

The relation of our country to the other nations of the earth, and, the hardy, adventurous character of our population, pre-eminently fit us for the work of foreign missions. The present Secretary of the American Home Missionary Society, in one of his earliest reports, happily denominates this country "the recruiting ground for the armies of Emanuel, where the soldiers of the cross are to be enlisted and trained! The home-bred, hardy character of self-reliance and daring, which Americans derive from their country—its physical nature, its popular institutions, and the rapidity with which great events crowd its history, combine to make them the very people from whom missionaries are to be chosen. A people whose language contains so much of the science and literature of the world; whose commerce spreads its sails on every sea and drops her anchor on every strand; whose Christianity is comparative fresh from the fountain, unmixed with the traditions, and unfettered by the establishments of men,—such a people is an agent appropriate and responsible for a large share of the instrumentality for converting the world! We are under the most solemn obligations, therefore, to labor for our country and our whole country. Not merely to preserve its civil freedom and its religious privileges unimpaired; not only to save its present and future millions from eternal woe; not for any nor for all of these ends, merely, but also for a larger and nobler object! Our aim is not the conquest of America *rather* than the world; but AMERICA FOR THE SAKE OF THE WORLD."

Christian Brethren: My argument is before you, why you should "go up and possess this land, as the Lord God of thy fathers hath said unto thee." He has said it, in his Word and in his Providence. He has appealed to your benevolence, your patriotism, your self-interest, and self-preservation. In every manner and by every motive He has called upon you, and me, and every American Christian, to put forth our choicest efforts for the evangelization of this country. The American Home Missionary Society affords one of the best and cheapest agencies for accomplishing this great result. It is a system peculiarly *Evangelical* and *American*. It has ever had the blessing of God upon it. If properly sustained by the prayers and the contributions of the churches, it may be for the salvation of the land! The teeming millions of this land shall yet belong to Christ, and be trained for heaven; and this is one of the chief instrumentalities, we believe, that God means to employ to bring about so glorious an end. Let, then, the love we bear our country, so full of promise, and rising to such a commanding eminence among the older na-

tions of the world—and the love we feel for souls, precious and immortal, crowding on in such masses to the judgment—and the love we cherish for the name and cause of our ascended Saviour, to whom we owe so much, and who has raised us to such spheres of influence and usefulness, for so important and holy an end, receive a full and appropriate expression in our energetic and untiring devotion to this work of missions.

